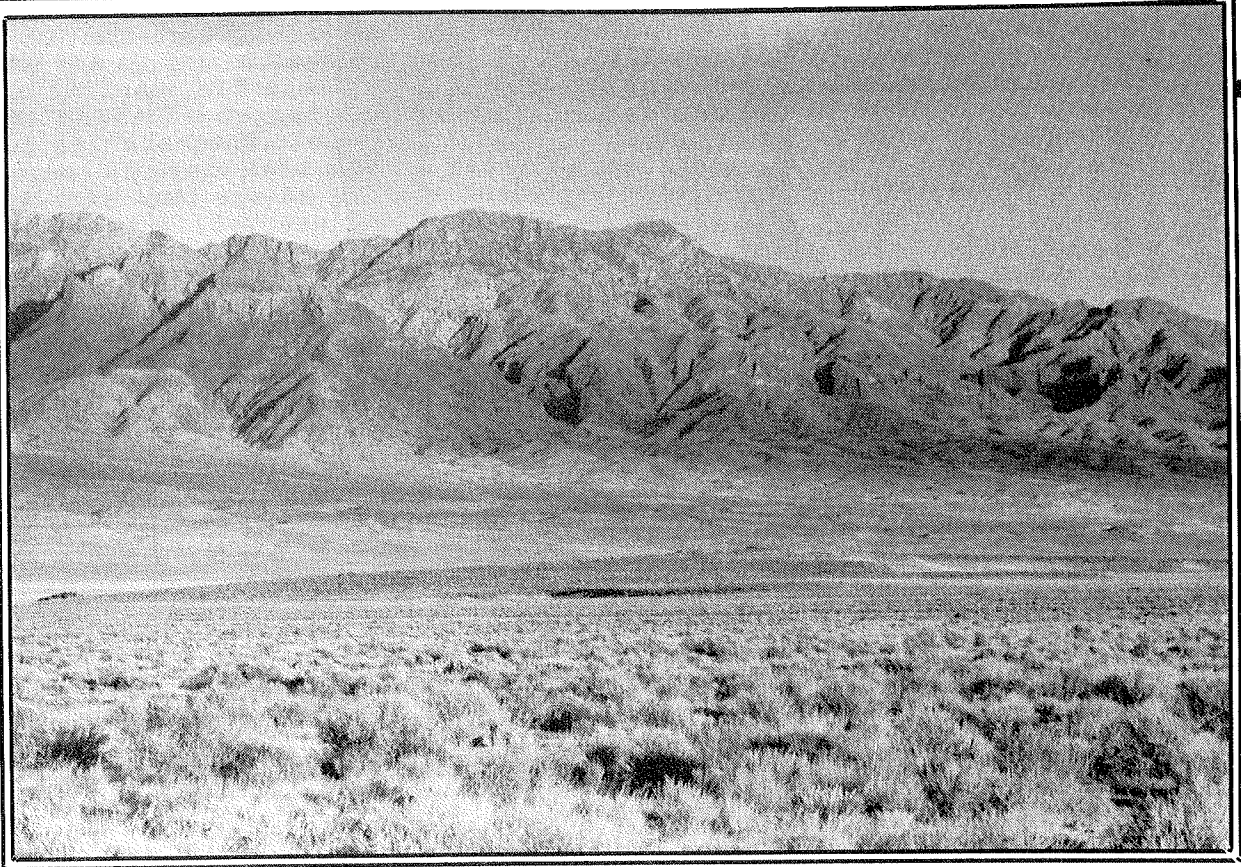


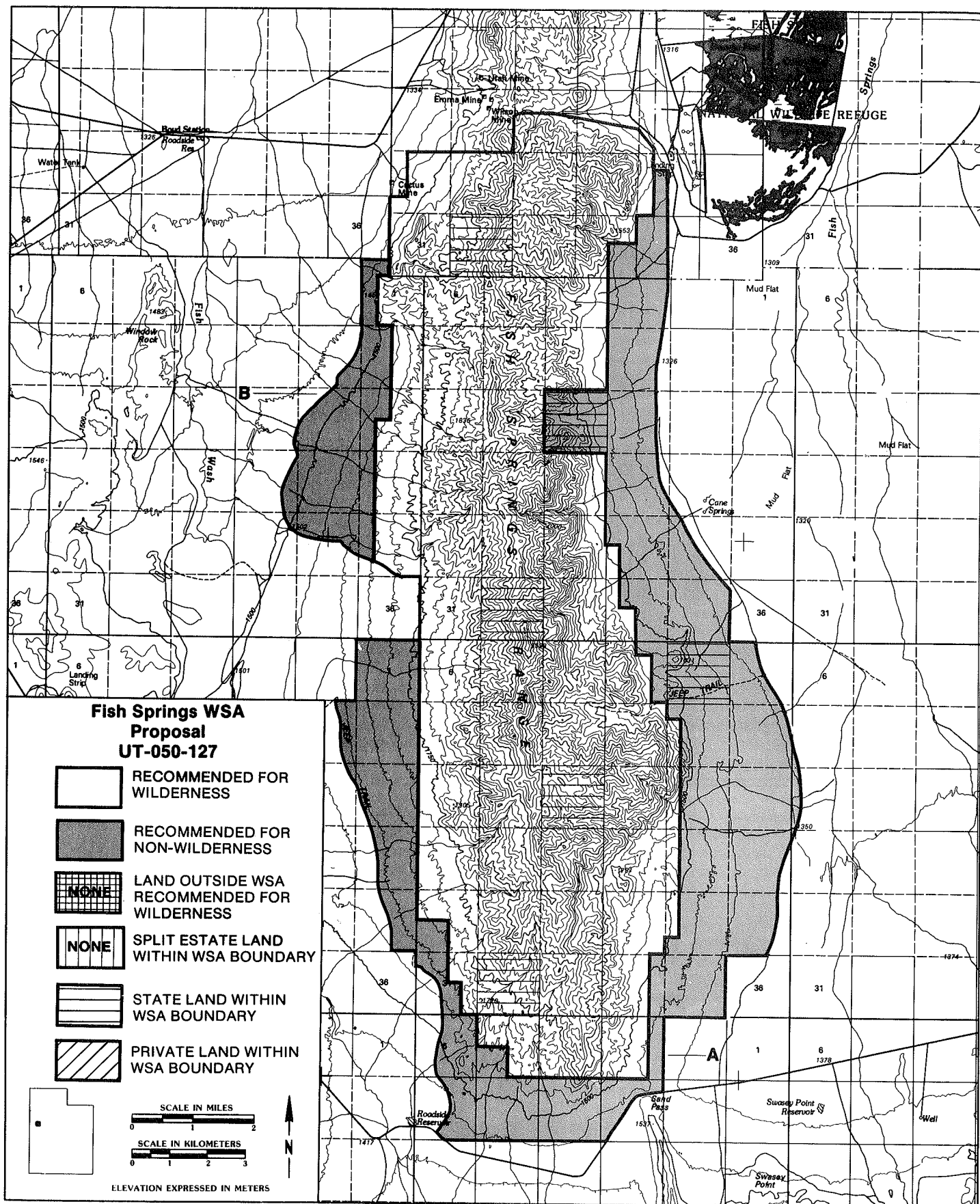
Fish Springs WSA



FISH SPRINGS WSA

R. 15 W.

R. 14 W.



T. 11

T. 12 S

T. 13 S.

FISH SPRINGS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 52,500 acres

The Fish Springs Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-050-127) is in northwestern Juab County, about 60 miles northwest of Delta, Utah (population 1,930). The WSA is about 16 miles from north to south and 6 miles from east to west at the widest part (see Map). The WSA contains about 52,500 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It includes six sections (3,840 acres) of State lands and an 80-acre parcel of private land. Four sections (2,560 acres) of State land and the parcel of private land are in the portion recommended for wilderness (see Table 1).

The WSA is bounded by improved and unimproved roads and the Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge to the north-east. The recommended portion of the WSA is defined along section and subsection lines that generally correspond with changes in steepness of slope and enclose the highest wilderness values.

The WSA includes most of the Fish Springs Range, a north-south trending ridge that rises abruptly from 5,000 feet at the base to 8,500 feet at the crest. The Fish Springs Range is at the southern margin of the Great Salt Lake Desert.

TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA^a

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	52,500
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	3,920
Total	56,420
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	33,840
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	33,840
In-holdings (State, private)	2,640
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	18,660
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	18,660
In-holdings (State, Private)	1,280

Source: BLM File Data

^a The Appendix is a detailed table of in-holdings included within the portion of the WSA recommended for designation.

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Vegetation in the WSA is predominantly shrubs and grasses at lower elevations and scattered pinyon pine and juniper at higher elevations. Some white fir grows in isolated, higher locations.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative, where 33,840 acres would be designated as wilderness and 18,660 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness, which is the recommendation in this report; a no wilderness (no action) alternative; and an all wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

- 33,840 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
- 18,660 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 33,840 acres as wilderness and release the remaining 18,660 acres for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. This recommendation for wilderness will further apply to any additional in-holding acreage acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. The Appendix lists in-holdings in the recommended portion and provides information on their acquisition.

The portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness, however, includes all parts of the WSA that have outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and the highest scenic quality in the WSA.

All of the area recommended for wilderness designation is in a completely natural condition with no human intrusions. The Fish Springs Range rises abruptly from the desert floor. Steep, dry and

craggy, it offers a vivid contrast to the flat lakebed surrounding it. Because of its proximity to plentiful water at the Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge, the range is an excellent place to find a wide variety of wildlife, particularly raptors. Two endangered species are found here (peregrine falcon and bald eagle). About 74 percent (25,200 acres) of the recommended portion has outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Opportunities for geologic sightseeing and study are above average. No significant conflict with other uses exists.

The portion of the WSA (Areas A and B) not recommended for wilderness designation is mostly foothills or benchlands that lack outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Wilderness designation of this portion of the WSA would impose constraints on possible livestock management and wildlife habitat improvements. These resource values and uses are thought to be more significant than the relatively minimal wilderness values.

3. CRITERIA USED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. The main portion of the Fish Springs Range is in a natural condition. The entire WSA meets the Wilderness Act criteria for naturalness. For the most part, the vegetation and topography blend over the range of elevation and appear untouched by man's activities. The lower slopes on the margin of the WSA have a variety of vehicular ways in various stages of natural rehabilitation. A U.S. Air Force (USAF) High Accuracy Multiple Object Tracking System (HAMOTS) facility was installed in the WSA in 1979, disturbing an area only 40 feet in diameter. The facility is nonimpairing under the Interim Wilderness Management guidelines and BLM has stipulated that it be removed if the

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WSA is designated as wilderness. A cruise missile crashed in the WSA in 1984 but the crash site was restored to a natural condition.

B. Solitude

Opportunity for finding solitude, i.e., seclusion from other people, is outstanding in the central part of the WSA on 25,200 acres (48 percent of the WSA).

The WSA is large enough to allow visitors to find seclusion. The range is long and narrow and is dissected by narrow, deep and winding canyons. The canyons and steep slopes and ridges offer possibilities for finding solitude. Isolated pinyon-juniper woodlands and scattered white fir stands at higher elevations also provide solitude.

Occasional traffic on nearby roads is not considered to have a significant effect on solitude in the WSA.

The Fish Springs WSA is in the South Range of the USAF Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR), one of the busiest military air spaces in the country. From 100 to 150 flights as low as 100 feet above the ground are made daily within the UTTR, 6 days a week. Most flights near the WSA are subsonic and are not directly over the WSA. These overflights can cause sight and sound distractions that lessen but do not eliminate overall opportunities for solitude.

Opportunities for solitude are not outstanding on the remaining 27,300 acres of public lands in the WSA. These areas are benchlands at lower elevations and include the portion that is not recommended for wilderness designation. The terrain does not provide solitude, and vegetative screening is very limited.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation were evaluated by considering miles of hiking routes in relation to size of the WSA, kind of recreational opportunities present, and quality of recreational opportunities. In the central part of the WSA, opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation on 25,200 acres (48 percent of the WSA) meet the standards set by the Wil-

derness Act. The lower benchlands, comprising the remaining 27,300 acres in the WSA, do not meet the criteria. In the portion of the WSA recommended for wilderness designation, 74 percent meets the standards for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Only one recreational activity, however, geologic sightseeing, is considered to be better than of average quality. Opportunities for this activity are best in the rugged central portion of the WSA.

D. Special Features

The Fish Creek Range is a tilted fault block of sedimentary rocks, and includes bedding plane faults visible in over 28,000 acres in the central part of the WSA. This phenomenon is of interest to geologists.

The WSA has been proposed for reintroduction of desert bighorn sheep. Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, both of which are endangered species, and golden eagles, a BLM sensitive species, inhabit the WSA. The area is considered to be crucial yearlong habitat for golden eagles.

Candidate threatened or endangered species that may occur in the WSA include the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, long-billed curlew, western snowy plover, white-faced ibis, and Bonneville pocket gopher. The bird species frequent areas throughout the Great Basin and other parts of the western United States and are not confined to the Fish Springs WSA. Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystem not presently represented in

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Utah, although it is represented in the NWPS outside the state.

PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area. The WSA is in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in the WSA is juniper-pinyon woodland (12,500 acres) and saltbush-greasewood (40,000 acres). Both kinds of PNV are represented in the NWPS nationally and in other BLM study areas in Utah and other states. This

information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah standard metropolitan statistical areas. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	4	81,301	77	2,150,403
Saltbush-Greasewood	3	45,553	37	1,020,726
UTAH (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	2,600	13	247,033
Saltbush-Greasewood	0	0	7	106,845

Source: BLM File Data.

TABLE 3
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	11	1,099,962	78	2,207,175
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	90	2,734,368

Source: BLM File Data.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

A Fish Springs Wilderness would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within

the NWPS in the west central United States. Designation of the WSA could, however, contribute to the geographic distribution of NWPS areas in the Great Basin of Utah and Nevada.

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As of January 1987, the NWPS included 23 areas comprising 4,868,316 acres in Utah and the nearest adjacent states (Idaho and Nevada). In a clockwise direction within a 100 mile radius of the Fish Springs WSA, beginning to the northeast, are the 25,500-acre Deseret Peak Wilderness, the 30,088-acre Lone Peak Wilderness, and, to the east, the 28,000-acre Mt. Nebo Wilderness. All are in National Forests.

No wilderness areas have been designated west or south in the vicinity of the WSA, however. In the Great Basin, there are only six designated wilderness areas totaling 272,994 acres but no wilderness areas in the Great Basin have the same combination of PNV as the WSA (see "Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems. . ."). If designated, a Fish Springs Wilderness would supplement the distribution of wilderness in the Great Basin.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.)

The portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness designation can be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. Resource and land use conflicts are not now a problem in the WSA and are not anticipated to be in the future.

Provision of access to and activities on 2,640 acres of State and private land inheld in the portion of the WSA recommended as wilderness could affect wilderness values and uses in the study area. BLM could not administratively control development of those lands. However, little or no development is projected for the in-held lands in the foreseeable future. There are no mineral leases on public lands in the WSA. Of 108 mining claims in the WSA, 96 are in the area recommended as wilderness. Valid claims could be developed following designation, but development is not expected in the foreseeable future.

Vehicular use and recreation would not be a management problem. The WSA is isolated and recreational use is estimated at not more than 50 annual visitor days. The area is presently open for ORV use but little or no such activity is occur-

ring. Livestock grazing could continue as at present in the designated area, requiring little or no change in management.

The USAF has stated that low level military overflights will continue in the UTTR, including the Fish Springs Range, regardless of whether or not the WSA is designated as wilderness. Overflights by military aircraft therefore would continue and would detract from opportunities for solitude. BLM management could not mitigate such disturbance. This conflict can only be resolved on the Congressional level.

There is a USAF High Accuracy Multiple Object Tracking Station (HAMOTS) in the WSA. This portable unit was determined to be nonimpairing to wilderness values. It was allowed in the WSA with the stipulation that it be removed if the area were designated as wilderness. Therefore, it is not a manageability problem.

The area not recommended for wilderness designation also could be managed as wilderness. Little or no change in use is expected, and present management would continue.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) prepared a mineral assessment report for the Fish Springs WSA (USGS Bulletin 1745-A, David A. Lindsey, et al., 1989). A mineral resource study of the 33,840-acre area proposed for wilderness was done in 1987. The results indicate that the northwestern and southeastern parts of the area studied contain inferred subeconomic resources of high-purity quartzite. No metallic mineral resources were identified in the area proposed for wilderness, but more than 17 million pounds of lead, 2.6 million ounces of silver, and minor amounts of copper, zinc, and gold have been produced from the Fish Springs mining district, which is immediately outside the northwest boundary of the WSA. The potential for undiscovered deposits of these metals and molybdenum is high near the northern end of the area that was studied, adjacent to the mining district; moderate near the southern end; and low in the remainder of the area. The resource potential for

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undiscovered deposits of high-purity limestone and dolomite is moderate throughout the area except where quartzite is present. Potential for undiscovered low-temperature geothermal resources and for gas and oil is low throughout the area.

According to BLM geologists, small structural traps containing oil and gas may occur in the WSA, but their existence is highly speculative. The geology of the Fish Springs Range is unfavorable for large deposits of oil and gas.

Small amounts of fluorite and barite have been found in the WSA.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives including designation of the entire area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered to be significant issues in the EIS.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 53 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 63 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 40 commenters supported the wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 18 commenters were opposed. Five commenters addressed the

relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

The majority of those favoring wilderness designation were from urban parts of Utah and from other states. Of particular concern was the need to protect wilderness values and threatened species.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness designation would preclude mineral exploration and development, cause conflicts with the use of in-holdings and with nonprimitive recreational use, and restrain wildlife management. They also felt that the WSA is not manageable as wilderness. Half of those opposed to wilderness designation are local citizens. Nearly half of those opposed are affiliated with the mineral and livestock industries.

One Federal agency, the USAF, commented on the Draft EIS for this WSA. The USAF did not take a position regarding designation or nondesignation of the WSA. The USAF noted that low altitude flights will continue over the WSA with or without wilderness designation and that they will not negotiate nor sign any agreement to avoid the proposed wilderness area. This conflict can be resolved only on the Congressional level.

The USAF also commented on the presence of and need for HAMOTS and other communication facilities in the WSA and on other public lands in the UTTR. It is the USAF's position that these facilities in their current location and other locations in the future are critical to the success of advanced defense testing at the UTTR and that BLM must allow these communication facilities to remain in place following wilderness designation. This would not be possible under BLM's current Wilderness Management Policy.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are six State sections (3,840 acres) in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation

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of the WSA. The State noted that the Fish Springs WSA has moderate wilderness values and conflicts. Mineral development conflicts are possible. Specific State comments on the Draft EIS dealt with desert bighorn sheep transplants, and the accuracy of the geology, mining claim, vegetation, and mineral development discussions.

The Juab County Commission is opposed to designation of the WSA as wilderness. The County generally prefers that open spaces be used for many purposes on public lands. The Juab County Commission has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness which opposes wilderness designation for BLM lands in Utah.

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Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Alternatives		
	Recommendation Partial Wilderness (33,840 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (52,500 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would be preserved in the designated area which is about 64 percent of the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be slightly reduced in quality on 2 acres due to guzzler development. Vehicular use of 8 miles of ways would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Special features would be preserved.	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be slightly reduced in quality on 2 acres due to guzzler development. Special features would not be negatively affected. Vehicular use of 10 miles of ways would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.	Wilderness values would be preserved. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be slightly reduced in quality on 2 acres due to guzzler development. Closing all ways to vehicular use would enhance opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Special features would be preserved.
Impacts on Livestock Management	Partial wilderness designation would not affect livestock management since the grazing use is made in the nondesignated area.	Livestock grazing would not be affected because access and management actions would continue as at present.	Wilderness designation would result in restrictions on access and inconvenience to three livestock permittees and slightly increase costs of management and controlling predation on livestock.
Impacts on Air Force Operations	A U.S. Air Force High Accuracy Multiple Object Tracking Station (HAMOTS) would be removed from the WSA.	A U.S. Air Force HAMOTS would remain in the WSA.	A U.S. Air Force HAMOTS would be removed from the WSA.

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Appendix
Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Non-Federal Holdings Within Areas Recommended for Designation ^a

Legal Description (Prior to any Subdivision)	Total Acreage	Number of Owners (If Parcel has been subdivided)	Type of Ownership by Estate (Federal, State, Private, Other) (Surface Estate) (Subsurface Estate)	Presently Proposed for Acquisition (Yes, No)	Preferred Method of Acquisition (Purchase, Exchange, Other)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Land Costs)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Processing Costs)
T. 11 S., R. 14 W., Sec. 32	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 12 S., R. 14 W., Sec. 32	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 13 S., R. 14 W., Sec. 16	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 13 S., R. 14 W., Sec. 32	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 11 S., R. 14 W., Sec. 31	80.00		Private	No	Purchase	\$4,300 to \$8,400	\$1,000

^a The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a Federal appraised value of the land or mineral estate, but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-Federal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.